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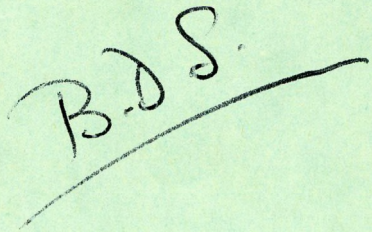
ADYAR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THE CONCEPT OF SHIVA

THE cult of Shiva-worship has been in existence in India for a long time, and it centres round a conception which is highly interesting from the occult standpoint, as given in H. P. Blavatsky's works and other Theosophical literature.

Shiva is one of the Three Persons of the manifested Godhead according to Hindu ideas, Brahmā and Vishnu being the other Two. In the language of the Christian creeds, " none is afore or after the other," They being of one substance though with different functions. Sometimes in Hindu philosophy and in the popular religion one particular aspect of the Deity is exalted. Brahmā, for instance, as the progenitor of all, may be thought of as highest God. But in another context another God or aspect, Vishnu, may appear supreme. The very word " Vishnu " means the " all-pervading ". We may therefore regard

Vishnu as the Deity who stands behind and embraces the universe in all its different aspects. Sometimes, to distinguish this underlying reality from the manifested aspect, He is called Mahā-Vishnu, *Mahā* meaning "great". Vishnu, in this sense of an omnipresent Deity, has a triple aspect. In one of the books He is referred to as the Deity who is Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva.

H. P. B. quotes an Indian work as saying that *Mahat*, the Universal Mind, or, as she calls it, "the pre-cosmic ideation," is Vishnu before it manifests as Brahmā and Shiva. It seems to be the case that sometimes Brahmā is spoken of as the one God of manifestation, who undergoes a number of transformations; sometimes that Deity is spoken of as Vishnu, although ordinarily Brahmā is the Creator and Vishnu the Preserver and Ruler.

The Deity who is Brahmā and Vishnu transforms Himself into Shiva, the Destroyer. So these three are aspects of which one is derived from the other. The same thought, that it is the one Deity who transforms Himself into different guises, is borne out by the statement that the complexion of Shiva is

different in different periods of time. H. P. B. interprets this as meaning that the races are evolved in order with differently colored people—blue-black, red, yellow, white, and so on. That is possibly just one interpretation. The main idea seems to be that at the very source there is only the One Life, and that Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva are all aspects which appear in each succeeding cycle necessarily with a certain difference. They are aspects of the Supreme Principle manifesting periodically and going back into the original state.

Shiva is described in *The Secret Doctrine* as "the immediate production of the First Principle," that is why He is so purely spiritual in His nature. The Kumāras, who are said to be ageless, eternally young, are also spoken of as Intelligences or "Dhyānis" derived immediately from the Supreme Principle, so that they are in some way manifestations or aspects of Shiva. In fact Shiva Himself is spoken of sometimes as Shiva-Kumāra, indicating His Eternal Youth. All the Kumāras are in the Hindu lore mind-born sons of Brahmā, the first manifested Deity. Perhaps we should say they are manifestations on the very first plane of the

cosmos, who remain there. Vishnu is very often pictured as having His abode on the waters, therefore named Nārāyana. He may well be regarded as the God who pervades the waters, the realms of matter symbolized by water, whereas Shiva represents Fire or electricity and is the transformer through whom the spiritual energy is stepped down from its transcendent state to the plane of manifestation. There is a Samskrit verse which speaks of the one Fire as having its seat in the midst of the waters. The fire is the consuming energy of God or Spirit which continually modifies the state of matter through which it flows. H. P. B. regards the triangle in the Theosophical seal, which has its vertex pointing downwards, as typical of Vishnu, the immanent Deity, and the upward pointing triangle as symbolizing Shiva, whose nature is a pure spiritual flame, all the time gravitating towards the source from which it has descended. Shiva is the pure essence which underlies the spiritual nature of things. The term " Seventh Principle " was used in the old Theosophical writings to refer to it, but we do not use these numbers very much at present.

The word Shiva appears to have come into existence at a later period. Originally the same God was spoken of in Hindu scriptures as Rudra. Sometimes He is called *Shiva Rudra*, combining two different aspects, *Rudra* with reference to the disintegration of forms, and Shiva in the aspect of regeneration, the life released by the destroyed form. These descriptions are interesting when we can understand their deep meaning.

Shiva is regarded popularly as the typical or archetypal Yogi, the yogi of yogis who destroys the passions of the physical nature in order to awaken the perceptions of the spiritual consciousness. He is the destroyer of the baser, the confining aspect of things. Yet at the same time He is the Regenerator, who releases and brings into action the spiritual Being encased in humanity. The spiritual man is essentially that consciousness which from purely human levels has been able to raise itself to a state in which it functions with the purely spiritual attributes. Shiva is especially the God, or aspect of the Deity, towards which spiritual aspirants are recommended to turn their thoughts. That is especially so in

one school. But there are other schools which hold up Vishnu as the supreme Deity to be worshipped. From our viewpoint, these are distinctions which are merely to be understood. It is foolish to make such comparisons as are indulged in by devotees of the different sects.

It is because Shiva represents the awakened spiritual nature of man that He is described as possessing the third eye. In *The Voice of the Silence* H. P. B. uses the Tibetan phrase, the Eye of Dangma, referring to the same. When this eye is opened it is supposed to give an insight into everything which had till then been closed. The opening of this inner eye is not clairvoyance in the ordinary sense, H.P.B. explains. It is much more the spiritual intuition which is a faculty that will be manifested fully in humanity in later rounds.

There is a reference to Shiva in one of the *Mahatma Letters* which is a quotation. He is there spoken of as " plunged in the depths of true Being, which is no being but eternal, universal Life," and as being " above care, above sorrow, above sin and worldliness, a mendicant, a sage, a healer, the King of Kings, the Yogi of Yogis ".

The popular conception of Shiva is that of One who sits in profound meditation on Mount Kailāsa. There is a good deal of allegory surrounding this conception. The idea of rapt meditation on a lofty solitary peak represents the state of aloneness in which alone the true nature of the highest spiritual principle in man can be realized. It is only in a state not of loneliness, which is an emotion, but of aloneness, which is pure spirituality, that there can be absolute purity as well as absolute freedom. To be alone is to be unattached, not isolation, but unaffected or undisturbed by what is touched, a state of primordial purity into which no extraneous influence has entered. It is also a state of freedom, because of freedom from any modifying influence, pure self-determination, all our determinations at present being products of influences exerted upon us.

The very word Shiva means pure, good and auspicious. Even ordinarily the Shaivites, those who are worshippers of Shiva, although they anthropomorphize that essence as is the popular tendency everywhere, generally live strict lives. They often wear white ashes on

the forehead which are not the ashes of penitence, the sentiment of Lent in Christian lands, but typify that dispassion which arises from the destruction of passions.

The quality of detachment or unworldliness is a pronounced characteristic both of the Shaivite and Buddhist systems of thought although they are so unlike in various respects. The detachment culminates in that aloneness which is personified in Shiva. In fact, without a measure of detachment there is no possibility of attaining that calm which is superbly illustrated in both Shiva and the Buddha. How can any one of us quiet the mind which rushes about like an unbroken colt all over the field? You cannot break the mind, for if you break it you cannot use it. The mind can become still only through understanding. A man who understands becomes inwardly detached, tranquil and quiet.

Shiva is said to receive on His head the waters of the tremendous torrent that pacified assumes the form of Ganga. That is to say, He receives into Himself those extra-cosmic forces by means of which the transformations that

take place within the field of evolution are effected step by step. These may be thought of also as forces which are outside a particular system. The forces are tremendous, as we can now well believe, because we see that in the very heart of matter even as we know it there are concealed forces of inconceivable intensity. The torrent of spiritual energy which is Ganga is received by Shiva into His being, and is stepped down. To use an electrical simile, the forces are transformed from level to level. The forces brought down are typified by the physical river Ganga which has its source near Kailas and flows past Kāshi or Banaras. This river is supposed to have been brought down through the mediation of Shiva and is therefore considered sacred. As the forces are stepped down through the various planes, that which is subjective in the beginning is gradually made objective. I think it is rather a beautiful simile. Shiva receives the heavenly torrent into His ascetic locks and eventually the waters are released, according to the legend, as the result of intensive prayers addressed to Him. There are a number of stories which are different in details.

Sometimes He is spoken of as the terrific God. Any living being down here would be electrocuted if he touched a high voltage wire for which the human body is not adapted. Then there is the idea of Shiva as wearing a tiger skin. The tiger skin symbolizes the complete destruction of the elemental passions. The tiger is full of animal vitality apt to be somewhat destructive. "Kill out," says *Light on the Path*, with reference to ambition and other impediments. There has to be the complete destruction of these beyond the possibility of revival. The same truth is brought out in the burning of Kama, the god of sensual passion, who is said to have attempted to disturb Shiva in His meditation, with the result that Shiva opened His third eye and Cupid was turned to ashes on the spot. But such happenings are often not final. His wife is said to have pleaded for him and he is restored to life of some sort. This also is allegorical. He lives in memory which is the seat of the passions. Even when the passions are incapable of being manifested actively they continue their existence in a chamber from which they issue on opportunity.

Shiva, like the other two Persons, is regarded as having a Consort, who is His *Shakti*. It is the energy that rays out from His particular nature. The energy is purely spiritual, but is made manifest only through a medium; and that medium is an appropriate form of matter. The enkindling touch of the Spirit is necessary for the awakening of the energy which seems to arise then from within the depths of that type of matter.

Matter in the first state, or on the first plane of manifestation, being pure, may be described as virginal. The transformations of the Spirit on the different planes are all related to the transformations of Matter. They are wedded at different levels, an idea which we must not make too anthropomorphic. The original matter which is purely spiritual is symbolized by Virgo or *Kanya*. Through it shines the life and energy of the Spirit, the life and the energy going together. That original state of the pure spiritual essence is spoken of as the "Virgin of Light". But later it is modified in various ways, becomes complex in its nature; the one Energy breaks up into diverse currents, animating different forms. The Virgin becomes

the Mother. In some of the ancient books there are references to three Mothers, presumably of the three Gods, Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva. Mother in one aspect and Consort in another, it is a capability in each case of the one Energy.

There is another symbol which is also interesting. Shiva is pictured as wearing the the moon on His forehead, so that where He is there is illumination like moonlight. It is the light of the Virgin or the light of the soul united with the Spirit. The person who has not gone into these matters carefully regards soul and Spirit as the same, but one advantage of the knowledge that we have in Theosophy is that we have some understanding of what these different terms mean. The moon always symbolizes reflected light. The sun is self-luminant. That is the distinction between sun and moon whenever these terms are used symbolically. It is the light of the sun which is reflected by the moon. The light of the soul is the light of the Spirit or Atman reflected by or through the passive medium of the soul or Buddhi.

The influence which belongs to the whole conception of Shiva is very pure. The influence

of all the Kumāras is of the same nature. The Kumāras are immortal youth, ever fresh and young, because they remain in the pure spiritual state from which they do not descend. It is only when the evolutionary tide has descended to its proper depth and then ascends to Their level that the connection is made between the nature which belongs to the Kumāras and the ascending or evolving consciousness. In other words, they are great Beings who so far as the lower planes are concerned await Their time to play the part assigned to Them in the evolutionary drama. The medium for Their influence, for the manifestation of Their attributes, has to be evolved before it is possible for the evolving consciousness to contact that pure nature which obtains at the highest level. When the Kumāras are spoken of, the thought which comes to the mind is that of absolute spiritual purity with an eternal freshness. They represent the pure spiritual essence, the precious water of spirituality.

The influence of the Shiva conception and Shiva-worship, in spite of various elements of grossness which may be intermingled with it,

can still be felt in some of the Shaivite temples. It is also the influence which is predominant in the Bharata Samāj worship.

The picture of Shiva, as we find it in the bazaars, is generally a gross parody, a terrible materialization. Because the conception is so transcendent the worldly mind is incapable of understanding its loftiness and purity. In the book *The Christian Creed*, by C. W. Leadbeater, he points out how certain truths which are cosmic in their nature have been grossly materialized by the churches for lack of understanding. Apparently every truth which has to be understood intuitively with a pure mind is liable to popular misconception. That is what has happened in the Hindu as well as other religions.

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